

Among my responsibilities as city administrator is the general management of all city personnel. Over the last year, I've often reflected on public employment in general and Evansville's employees specifically. This is a theme I will elaborate over my next couple articles.

By and large, we have great employees.

For city government, our business is about people. We provide services – from police protection; to basic utilities such as electricity, water, and sewer; to public library; to street maintenance; to beautiful parks; and on and on. These services are fundamental to the fabric of a healthy community.

A recurring discussion over the last couple years has been providing high-quality services for our residents and businesses. We use terms such as “top-notch service” and “drive for excellence.” It is an emphasis on improving operations and service, best management practices and professionalism, and third party recognition.

An example of improved service is the Public Works Department applying a salt brine prior to snowstorms in order to reduce the time it takes to clear the streets. The Finance Department now accepts on-line and by-phone payment of utility bills for better customer ease and convenience. Another example is the city's becoming an owner-member in WPPI Energy a few years ago.

There are many examples of best management practices. The Public Works Department participates in the Federal Emergency Management Association's Community Rating System which results in a fifteen percent discount in flood insurance premiums citywide. The Police Department has been working toward applying for formal accreditation by the Wisconsin Law Enforcement Accreditation Group. Later this summer our Electric Utility will “apply” for the American Public Power Association's Reliable Public Power Program; this application is meant to set a baseline to determine areas we need to improve for a formal application in the future.

We also encourage certification and continuing education of staff. Our City Clerk earned certification as a municipal clerk a couple years ago. The Wastewater Operator has earned certification for our upgraded treatment plant. We have a qualified team of journey-level electric line workers. The Water & Light Superintendent and Finance Director are taking a series of utility management courses. Staff are also active with trade associations for police, ambulance, utilities, building inspection, and labor relations. Such continued investment in training helps ensure high quality services for our residents and businesses.

Third party recognition may include the best management practices and certifications just mentioned. It also includes awards and recognition we've received the last few years for our smart growth plan, Main Street reconstruction, various energy conservation efforts, Tree City and Bird City designations, and the new wastewater treatment facility. And it includes active representation in the League of Wisconsin Municipalities (LWM)

Legislative Advisory Committee, on the board of the LWM Engineers and Public Works Section, and with the LWM Lobby Corps.

I don't mean to say that everything is perfect; there is more to do. After all, with an emphasis on continuous improvement, it should be expected that there will be more to do. We've run a tight and frugal budget. An overall goal of the budget is to improve efficiency of providing services, not just to cut. In a labor-intensive business such as city government, our employees are essential to providing high quality services.

Evansville has a team of elected officials and staff committed to working in the community's interest. We're all in this together, and each and every employee contributes to the city's mission of a thriving and prosperous community.